

"Liberty Hall"
Frankfort, Kentucky
Franklin Co

HABS No. 20-2

HABS
KY
37-FRAFO,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 20

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
G. M. Grimes, District Officer
304 Martin Brown Building
Louisville, Kentucky

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-2-

Name of structure "Liberty Hall"

Location: 218 Wilkinson Street, Frankfort,
Franklin County, Kentucky

Owner or
custodian: Miss Mary Mason Scott

Address: 218 Wilkinson Street, Frankfort,
Franklin County, Kentucky

Date built: 1796
(approx)

Architect
or builder: Thomas Jefferson

Present
condition: Excellent

Number of
stories: Two stories and attic (finished),
also basement.

Material used
in construction: Foundation: Brick.
Exterior walls: Solid brick.
Interior partitions: Brick and frame,
plastered.
Floors: Wood, random width, oak;
basement: earth.
Roof: Frame construction, covered with
wood shingles.

Description: This noble old house was built by
architectural Hon. John Brown, who was born at
and historical Staunton, Virginia, September 12, 1757.

Mr. Brown attended Washington College and Princeton;
enlisted in the Revolutionary Army and served under General
George Washington; crossed the Delaware with these troops,
and later served with General Lafayette. At the close of

the war he completed his education at William and Mary College; studied law in the office of Thomas Jefferson, with whom he was closely associated until his removal to Kentucky in 1783, and again in Philadelphia, and later in Washington while Mr. Jefferson was, respectively, Secretary of State, and President. He held the following public offices during his life:

Member of the Virginia Senate for the
"District of Kentucke", 1784-1788.

Member of the "Kentucke District of
Virginia" to the Continental
Congress, 1787-1788.

Elected from Virginia, "Kentucke District",
to the First and Second United States
Congress, 1789-1792.

Member of the Committee that formed the
State of Kentucky.

United States Senator from Kentucky,
1792-1805.

Elected president pro tempore of the Senate
from October 17, 1803 to
January 23, 1804.

The foregoing record was obtained from the
Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774-1926,
pages 36, 45, 47, 51, 55, 60, 65, 67, 68, 73 and 74. Also
in the Biographical Directory of Kentucky, page 14; pub-
lished in 1878 by Armstrong and Company.

The secretary of the Kentucky Historical
Society states that Mr. Brown was the last surviving
member of the Continental Congress, died at "Liberty Hall",
August 29, 1837.

The following from The Register of the Kentucky
Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky, by Mr. Rexford
Newcomb:

"In this noble old house, built by the Honorable
John Brown in 1796, the plan is a central hall with
spanning arch and stairway flanked by two rooms on either
side. The kitchen wing is here carried out one step below
the main portion of the house. In other words, "Liberty
Hall" presents the full-blown Georgian Plan. Here also
the mass has received great thought and detailed study, and
presents in its pediment-crowned frontal bay a motif quite
unusual in the Pennsylvania and Virginia houses of its day.
The portal is of noble lines and above it the handsomest
Palladian window in Kentucky is to be seen".

The brick of which this large rectangular, twenty-room house was built, was burned on the site, and the glass for the windows was transported on mule-back over the Alleghany Mountains from Philadelphia.

The statement that "Liberty Hall" was planned by Thomas Jefferson has been handed down for four generations in the family who have lived in the house since its erection in 1796. This date is verified by a letter from Mr. John Brown, then in Philadelphia, to Judge Harry Innes, at Frankfort, Kentucky, dated May, 1796, in which he speaks of hoping that Congress will adjourn soon so that his building program will not be interfered with.

The following information as to changes in the house and dates thereof, was obtained from Miss Mary Mason Scott, present owner and occupant:

The ball room changed about 1814; stairway to attic changed about 1833; bath room addition in back of "guest room" about 1837; the storage room, or pantry, off the kitchen about 1837; the cellar entrance was changed about 1837. Cornice in present dining room in 1884; panels under window in "green room" in 1908; panels under windows in the "drawing room" in 1918.

Always the scene of hospitality, and occupied by a family whose members came in contact with the great of the land, many distinguished Americans have been entertained within its walls. President Monroe, General Harrison, General Jackson, General Taylor and Theodore Roosevelt (who spent some time in Kentucky while writing "The Winning of the West"), were all honored guests of the Brown family on well authenticated occasions. General LaFayette is also known, from official records, to have been entertained there for tea when he visited Frankfort in May, 1825, and the very cup from which General LaFayette drank is still a prized possession of the present owners, the great-grand children of John Brown.

On the death of John Brown in 1837, the house passed to his son, Judge Mason Brown, and in turn to the latter's daughter, Mrs. W. T. Scott; never having been owned, or occupied, as a residence by other than the original owner and his descendants to the present day.

G. M. Grimes

Revised 1936 H. C. Foreman

Addendum To:
Liberty Hall
Main & Wilkinson Streets
Frankfort
Franklin County
Kentucky

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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